



News Release

For Immediate Release:
Tuesday, October 26, 2010

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Chilling Effects of Domestic Violence Outlined in New Report

(Salt Lake City, UT) – A new report by the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) is the first in the nation to show the relationship between domestic violence (DV) and suicide. From 2005-2008, there were 165 DV-related suicides, which accounted for nearly 12 percent of all suicide deaths among Utah adults. This is an average of three DV-related suicides per month.

The number of DV-related suicides far outweighs the number of DV-related homicides. The majority of the DV-related suicides were committed by a person who had a violent history. Of these cases, only 10.3 percent committed a homicide immediately prior to their suicide.

“Utah is the first state to publish a more complete picture of the tragic impact DV homicides and suicides have on men, women, and children,” said Teresa Brechlin, Intentional Injury Coordinator with the UDOH Violence and Injury Prevention Program. “This report points to the urgent need to better identify and understand the devastating impact domestic violence and suicide have on families and communities.”

Data were collected through the Utah Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee (DVFRC) and the Utah Violent Death Reporting System (UTVDRS). The DVFRC meets monthly to review all adult DV-related homicides and suicides in Utah and make recommendations on how to prevent future DV-related deaths. The UTVDRS contains information from death certificates, medical examiner records, police reports, crime lab records, and homicide reports on all violent deaths in Utah.

Mental health played a large role in the circumstances surrounding DV-related suicides, with 32.7 percent of victims having a diagnosed mental illness. Of these victims, half had

- MORE -

Page 2 of 2 – New Report Shows Devastating Effect of Domestic Violence

diagnosed depression and 85.2 percent were currently in treatment for their illness. Problems with a current or former intimate partner contributed to 84.2% of the DV-related suicides.

The most common precipitating life stressor that appears to have contributed to the DV-related suicides was facing a criminal problem such as a recent or impending arrest, police pursuit, or an impending criminal court date (32.7%). This was significantly higher than other life stressors, including financial problems (12.7%), job issues (11.5%), and physical health problems (6.1%).

The report also shows:

- From 2003-2008, there were 87 DV-related homicides in Utah. This is an average of one DV-related homicide each month.
- One out of three adult homicides are DV-related.
- While Hispanic persons comprise only 10 percent of the population in Utah, they account for 77 percent of DV-related homicide victims.
- Females are 10 times more likely to die from DV-related homicide than males.
- One-third of the domestic violence perpetrators in DV-related homicide cases committed suicide after committing the homicide.
- 52% of intimate partner-related homicides were premeditated.
- A total of 147 children witnessed an intimate partner violence homicide; 78 percent of these children were under six years of age.

For a copy of the Domestic Violence Fatalities in Utah report visit

<http://health.utah.gov/vipp>.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.